

Frontline *Duty*

On the hunt.

photo by Staff Sgt. BRIAN FERGUSON

A fully armed MQ-9 Reaper taxis down the runway at a military base in Afghanistan before taking off on a mission. The remotely piloted aircraft, which can carry 500-pound bombs and Hellfire missiles, is on the offensive against insurgent forces in Afghanistan.

REAPER'S DEBUT GRIM FOR THE ENEMY

The Air Force upped the ante against insurgents in Afghanistan when it deployed its MQ-9 Reaper there to join in the war on terrorism. It was a long-awaited deployment. But less than a month after arriving, the Reaper showed its worth.

One of the remotely piloted aircraft flew the first combat mission, a strike where it dropped two 500-pound laser guided bombs and neutralized some enemy combatants.

A beefed-up version of its older MQ-1 Predator cousin, the Reapers can carry about the same weapons load as an F-16 Fighting Falcon, including 500-pound bombs and Hellfire missiles.

That gives coalition forces an “incredible addition to the arsenal,” said Lt. Gen. Gary North, U.S. Central Command Air Forces commander. Flown by a pilot and sensor operator at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., Reapers are “an incredible addition to our attack capability,” he said.

Elsewhere, some Airmen helped douse the massive fires that devastated Califor-

nia. Other Airmen packed their gear, went to Mali and provided local people free dental work.

And all the while, no matter where on the globe they found themselves, Airmen continued to train — whether it was to help Afghan police better respond to riots or to learn new AC-130 gunship evasive maneuvers over the Nevada desert.



Pull together.

photo by Master Sgt. ROBERT VALENCA

Airmen struggle to pull a Humvee during a Warrior Day event at Ali Air Base, Iraq. The monthly event is a competition to test how Airman, in this case from the 407th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, handle physically and mentally challenging situations.



Riot control.

photo by Master Sgt. JIM VARHEGYI | Afghan National Auxiliary Police trainees undergo riot control training at Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam, Afghanistan. Trainees went through two weeks of sustainment training taught by Afghan instructors. Before that class, Air Force security forces conducted the training.



Evasive action.

photo by LAWRENCE CRESPO

An AC-130 gunship “pops” chaff and flares as part of an evasive maneuver during a firepower demonstration at the Nevada Test and Training Range. The demonstration gives the general public a close-up and realistic view of the Air Force’s ability to perform its wartime mission.

Record setter.

photo by Master Sgt. SCOTT WAGERS

Fuels specialist Airman 1st Class Hazen Sanders knows how to pump fuel. He pumped a record 3.1 million gallons of fuel into 187 different aircraft at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, while working 12-hour shifts for 28 consecutive days. The 20-year-old, with the 435th Logistics Readiness Squadron, attempted the feat after squadron mates said it would be impossible to do.



Last-minute check.

photo by Tech. Sgt. ROY A. SANTANA

Tech. Sgt. Lamont Wood checks his nozzles before releasing 3,000 gallons of fire retardant over the Poomacha fire in north San Diego County, Calif. Airmen and C-130 Hercules from the 302nd Airlift Wing, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., deployed to Channel Islands Air National Guard Station, Calif., to help fight wildfires in October.



Mighty chomp.

photo by Staff Sgt. RONNIE HILL

Military working dog Robi lunges to take a bite out of “fleeing suspect” Staff Sgt. Troy Glover during an Airpower Day 2007 demonstration at Osan Air Base, South Korea. Sergeant Glover and Robi are with the 51st Security Forces Squadron.



A pretty smile.

photo by Tech. Sgt. JEREMY K. CROSS

Staff Sgt. Patricia Wheatley teaches a boy from Mali how to brush his teeth. The sergeant, from the 435th Dental Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, was part of a group of Airmen that took part in a medical readiness exercise in Senkoro, Mali. Besides providing medical help, these kinds of exchanges help foster peace, security and cooperation — and combat terrorism — in Trans-Sahara nations.